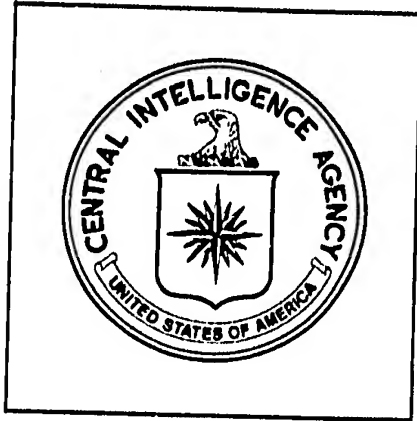


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WESTERN EUROPE - [REDACTED] - INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Phone: 143-5135

Labor Policy Dispute May Bring Cabinet Shakeup
in Spain

The Spanish cabinet is involved in a policy row which may trigger the departure of Labor Minister Licinio de la Fuente and bring other cabinet changes as well. Prime Minister Arias may shed light on how he will handle the dispute in a major policy speech scheduled for tonight.

The labor minister reportedly submitted his resignation in disagreement over a proposed labor law that would allow the dismissal of striking workers. Such a law would be a great defeat for his effort to obtain a decree granting a modified right-to-strike, which he has been advocating to lessen labor tensions.

Another factor in his resignation may be the determined effort he faces to bring his ministry's Social Security Institute under scrutiny of the finance ministry. There have been rumors of possible misuse of government funds at the institute.

Should De la Fuente, who is also a deputy prime minister, depart without getting a right-to-strike law, this would be a victory for those who advocate a hard line in dealing with political and labor unrest. This group won out last October when the information minister was dismissed in a dispute over press freedom. The then finance minister also resigned in protest. Another cabinet shakeup at this time would be a further blow to Arias' efforts to maintain his modest liberalization program in the face of ultra right opposition. (Confidential)

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Phone: 143-5135

Italian Labor Sets Nationwide Strike of US
Military Bases

Tomorrow, US military bases in Italy will be hit for the first time with a day-long nationwide strike by their Italian employees.

The unions have three principal demands:

- the abolition or change of a 1957 agreement which, in effect, prohibits collective bargaining between US forces and Italian labor.
- renewal of an Italian law which guarantees government re-employment to workers discharged by US forces.
- an upward revision of wage adjustments linked to the cost-of-living index.

The strike comes in the midst of numerous other work stoppages by the major Italian unions and does not appear to be motivated primarily by anti-US sentiment. It probably reflects, instead, labor's tendency to credit the recent escalation of strike activity for impressive gains scored in the latest round of negotiations with Italian employers. The unions had made little progress under their previous policy--followed until last September--of holding strike activity to a minimum.

It will be difficult to resist labor demands, particularly on the cost-of-living question. Italian employers, in an effort to secure labor peace, have given in to most of the other unions on the cost-of-living issue. (Confidential)

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[REDACTED]
Phone: 143-5205East-West Labor Meeting To Convene in Geneva

Labor federations from both Western Europe and the Communist states will be represented at the second East-West Trade Union Conference that convenes in Geneva on February 28-March 1. The Conference is considered a "private" meeting, under the auspices of the four European worker representatives on the Governing Board of the International Labor Organization (ILO). The sessions will be closed to the press and public, as was the case during the first Geneva conference a year ago.

During numerous bilateral discussions with European labor leaders in recent months, the Soviets have made a determined effort to broaden the agenda to include political subjects. British and West German trade unionists, among others, have assured US officials that they are adamantly opposed to allowing the meeting to be transformed into a platform for Soviet political purposes. Accordingly, the agenda is reportedly limited to technical labor matters, such as the humanization of the working environment and the protection of workers from the effects of toxic substances.

The meetings have an implicit political significance, however, given the prominence of the participants, who include leading West European trade union figures as well as the boss of the Soviet trade union organization. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the World Confederation of Labor, and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) will send observers. It is likely that the communist labor international, the World Federation of Trade Unions, will also be represented.

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The Soviets--publicly as well as privately--view the Conference as an important step in their continuing effort to establish closer ties with Western labor organizations. During his recent discussions with Finnish unionists, for example, Aleksandr Shelepin, the head of the Soviet labor organization, emphasized that Moscow wants increased contacts between the trade unions of East and West in order to develop a "continuous cooperation and exchange" which could ameliorate the current severe international economic problems.

Another high-ranking Soviet labor functionary told Italian labor leaders last month that the deepening economic crisis in the West makes it more important than ever for eastern labor organizations to establish a dialogue with western trade union federations on matters of mutual concern. As a result, he anticipates more frequent East-West labor meetings at various levels.

The Soviets have also been pressing for an agreement to establish a permanent organizational framework to accommodate further labor contacts outside of the ILO context. The prospects for reaching an accord on this matter at Geneva are uncertain. German and Norwegian union leaders have told [REDACTED] that they are strongly opposed to such a course and, at an ETUC Executive Committee meeting early this month, not a single member expressed support for the proposal. On the other hand, the British Trades Union Congress (TUC)--probably the strongest western advocate of the East-West labor dialogue--[REDACTED] while not initiating any demand for such machinery, it is "flexible" on the question. In addition, [REDACTED] 25X1X

25X1X [REDACTED] the Norwegians, Finns and British, in private talks with him and other West European trade union officials, are taking a stand in favor of constituting a permanent standing committee or secretariat. (Secret No Foreign Dissem/No Dissem Abroad/Background Use Only/Controlled Dissem)

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